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Bring Seattle Home statement on repeal of Progressive Tax on Business

1 message

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Statement on Repeal of Seattle's Employee Hours Tax by Bring Seattle Home campaign

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Seattle – We are disappointed to learn that the Progressive Tax on Business will be repealed.

We know current program and services are working: 5000 people moved out of homelessness last year. The number of homeless veterans and families has dropped as well, according to the latest Point-in-Time Count, a reflection of the additional resources allocated to those groups. We need substantial, dedicated revenue to fund these solutions at a level that matches the depth of the problem.

While thousands of Seattleites from all walks of life volunteer and contribute generously to help house, feed, and support neighbors in need, this is not a problem that can be solved through charity alone. Our city's wealthiest corporations must do their part. After all, they have contributed to the pressure on our housing supply that has forced thousands out of the city or into homelessness, including people surviving as best they can in public places, on streets, in cars or camps.

The union of Downtown Emergency Service Center (DESC) staff work on the front-lines providing shelter beds, housing supports, and case management for people experiencing homelessness and offer this perspective.

"Every day, we turn clients away because we don't have enough beds and we don't have enough staff to provide long-term case management to clients in the system," said Andrew Coak, who works at DESC. "On behalf of those clients, I implore the businesses who opposed the Employee Hours Tax to find a revenue stream and a plan you can support. It's literally a matter of life or death for the people I work with."

The need to address this problem is urgent and countless studies and commissions have pointed to the need for new, progressive revenue immediately. Seattle and King County declared a state of emergency around homelessness two and a half years ago. We cannot continue to reject every idea, delaying implementation of needed solutions.

"Seattle is not in a state of emergency because we don't know what to do, but because we haven't responded to a rising tide by building boats to keep our citizenry safe," says Alison Eisinger, Executive Director of the Seattle/King County Coalition on Homelessness. "Over the last few years, we've all seen the crisis of homelessness get much worse very fast. There is no mystery here – the correlation is very strong between soaring housing costs and many more people becoming homeless. Yes, we know what works, and our programs support thousands of people. But these programs can only do so much in a crisis this severe. Try helping someone living on \$771 a month disability benefits find somewhere – anywhere – to live in King County. Responsible businesses of all sizes should understand this math. Anyone and everyone who is serious about doing something to create the thousands more homes we need should speak up about their preferred revenue sources now – or forever hold their peace."

